When I was in third grade, I underwent MRIs, IQ, and puzzle tests, among other evaluations because I cried every day. Over the next five years, I went to a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and an educational psychologist every week until my condition was resolved. Thus, early on I grew a strong sense that problems are a part of life, they are not the final statement about me or my future, and it is entirely possible to carry on and succeed.

Thanks to this mindset, at age 13 I was able to accept the limitations of wearing a plastic vest suddenly imposed by my scoliosis diagnosis that ruled out running, playing sports, and riding a bike. I was determined to get my back pain under control, so after researching options, I started going to the gym five days a week.

Unfortunately, my spine eventually started pressing into my lungs. I had to undergo spinal fusion surgery, which meant I wouldn’t be able to exercise for a year and would lose flexibility for life. During the first month, I recovered from not moving at all to slowly getting up and walking. Determined to resume normal life, I adopted an intensive swimming routine, and after 10 months I could carry out all daily activities.

I approach life as if the cards I have been dealt are the cards I wanted all along. I have developed a mentality of taking in any obstacle, dealing with it, and then getting down to reaching my goals.

It is this mentality that has let me go to college, eventually transfer to Harvard, a